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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Eni F. H. Faleomavaega
Chairman

The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dr. Lisa Williams (202) 225-8577

Date: February 19, 2010

Washington, D.C. FALEOMAVAEGA ASKS PRESIDENT OBAMA TO VISIT
-- AMERICAN SAMOA

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that on February 2, 2010, one day after the White House announced that President Obama would be visiting Australia, Indonesia and Guam, Faleomavaega wrote to the President and asked if could also stop in American Samoa, if it all possible, on his return from Australia to Washington.

Faleomavaega followed up his request with letters to top White House officials, including White House Chief of Staff Mr. Rahm Emanuel and Ms. Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor and assistant to the President for Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs. Faleomavaega has also enlisted the help of House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer.

"If it is at all possible for President Obama to stop in American Samoa on his return from Australia, I think it would be a nice way for the President as Commander-in-Chief to just say thank you to the thousands of our Samoan men and women who currently serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, especially since no President has visited American Samoa since Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1967," Faleomavaega said. "A visit by President Obama would be especially meaningful to the people of American Samoa since he is the first President of the United States born and raised in Hawaii. Because his family is very much part of our Pacific family, our people would be deeply honored and very proud to welcome him to our islands."

"As I stated in my letter to the President, the Iraq war death rate per 1 million population is higher for American Samoa than any other State or Territory, and I enclosed two articles by USA Today for the President's information which commends our military men and women for their outsized sacrifice."

"In my letter to President Obama, I also noted that American Samoa was hit by the most powerful earthquake of 2009 which set off a tsunami with waves that towered over 20 feet high and which resulted in deeply personal tragedies for numerous families and villages. In response to this disaster which left American Samoa in ruins, President Obama was the first to promise full, swift and aggressive action to help American Samoa rebuild and recover. Our people are grateful to President Obama and the First Lady for their heartfelt support and we also appreciate the untiring efforts of the President's Cabinet Members, especially Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who made it possible for emergency relief supplies to be airlifted to our brothers and sisters in Western Samoa. A stopover in American Samoa by the President and his family at this time in the recovery process would go a long ways to show that under the Obama Administration's watch, residents of America will never suffer again like victims of Katrina did."

"The First Family's visit would also give special meaning to this year's Flag Day Celebration since, in April of this year, American Samoa will commemorate the 110th year of the raising of the US flag in American Samoa. No higher tribute could be paid to American Samoa's veterans -- past, present and future -- than for the Commander-in-Chief and especially this Commander-in-Chief who is the first ever Commander-in-Chief to be raised in Hawaii, to visit the islands of American Samoa and pay tribute to the sacrifices our people have made for this great nation of ours."

"I remain hopeful that President Obama will give serious consideration to this request, and, on behalf of the people of American Samoa, we look forward to welcoming him and the First Family should his schedule permit him to stopover or even refuel in American Samoa," Faleomavaega concluded.